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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1401
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1325
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3651
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NSC FOR DFISK
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: LITERACY AND IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT CAMPAIGNS
KICK OFF WITH CUBAN/VENEZUELAN SUPPORT

REF: LA PAZ 733 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4d and b.

11. (SBU) Summary: The Cuban-led national literacy campaign was kicked off to great fanfare on March 20, with President Morales pledging to eradicate illiteracy in 30 months. High-level Cuban and Venezuelan officials who participated in the ceremony accused past Bolivian governments of failing to address the needs of the country's disenfranchised. The Venezuela-supported campaign to distribute national identity documents, particularly in rural areas, is scheduled to begin March 23. Opposition representatives see both campaigns as part of a larger MAS strategy, supported by Cuba and Venezuela, to expand its support in the coming election and to assert control over the Constituent Assembly. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The Cuban-led national literacy campaign was kicked off to great public fanfare on March 20. President Evo Morales inaugurated the event in Camiri, in rural Santa Cruz, vowing to eradicate illiteracy in 30 months. The Ministers of Education of Cuba and Venezuela, along with the Ambassadors of both countries, also participated in the public ceremony. In remarks that were shown widely on national television, Venezuelan Minister Aristobolo Isturis said the literacy strategy was designed to serve Bolivia's disenfranchised poor, whose needs had been systematically neglected by past governments. According to news reports, the literacy program is based on a Cuban model that will reach up to 200,000 people per month in over 10,000 separate locations throughout the country. Teachers will reportedly include Cubans and Venezuelans as well as Bolivians.

13. (C) The Venezuela-supported program to distribute national identity documents is scheduled to begin on March 123. According to some sources, teams of Venezuelans armed with several hundred laptop computers will fan out across the country seeking to formalize the citizenship of Bolivians who have no official documentation. They will reportedly focus their efforts in rural areas where "non-citizen" Bolivians are most numerous. Some observers fear that the standards of proof to be used by these teams to establish the bona fides

of individual identity will be unduly lax, and lead to widespread identity fraud. Historically, Bolivians have had to provide birth certificates in order to receive national identification documents ("carnets"). In more recent years, given that many Bolivians do not have birth certificates, the sworn testimony of two witnesses has served to overcome this barrier.

14. (C) Opposition representatives see both the literacy and the identification document campaigns as part of a larger government strategy to expand its support for the coming election, assert control over the Constituent Assembly, and eliminate political competitors. According to sensitive reporting, the content of the literacy campaign is a confusing mix of "Bolivarian-ism" and soft Marxism, reflecting its Venezuelan funding and essentially Cuban design. Some contacts have suggested that the identity documents will be distributed in an implicit "quid pro quo" exchange, with the "quo" being a promise to support the MAS in the July election of Constituent Assembly representatives.

We also heard that among the Venezuelans leading the effort are several individuals known for having successfully manipulated voter rolls in their home country. (National Electoral Court officials have told us that, while the aim of the identification document campaign is clearly political, getting inscribed on to the voter rolls entails a subsequent step that each individual must take on his or her own, and in most cases might not be feasible before the the April 13 deadline for registering to vote.)

15. (SBU) Comment: Whatever else is true, the work of Cubans and Venezuelans in support of an openly political agenda in Bolivia is no longer hush-hush, but rather open and visible for all to see.

GREENLEE